

Approved by the Council on April 29, 2005

Recommendations for Building Capacity for Prekindergarten and 0-3 Services in High Need, Under-Resourced Communities

Background: In April 2004, the Council recommended that ISBE set aside some Early Childhood Block Grant funds to assist high-need, under-resourced communities to build capacity to offer PreK and 0-3 programs to families with young children. As ISBE gets ready to allocate potential new Block Grant funds in FY06, Interim Chief of Staff Eamon Kelly asked the Council to recommend what sorts of activities might be supported to help build capacity in high-need communities, as well as how much funding should be allocated for this purpose.

The Executive Committee recommended that a small group of Council members meet to develop ideas for discussion with the full Council. The recommendations below were developed by Claudia Fabian, Jan Maruna, Harriet Meyer, Jerry Stermer, Maria Whelan, and Luz Maria Solis, as well as Kay Henderson and Margie Wallen.

Next Steps

- Define the terms “high need” and “under-resourced” in order to identify the highest priority communities in need of PreK and/or 0-3 services

1. What types of activities might ISBE support to assist high-need, under-resourced communities to set up and begin offering PreK programs and/or research-based 0-3 services in FY06?

- Clearly state outcome of capacity building activities as children will be served in classrooms meeting ISBE’s PreK program standards and/or 0-3 program guidelines by January 2006, although flexibility in timeframes may be negotiated.
- Planning must result in actual spaces for children in PreK and/or 0-3 programs and services must begin in FY06. However, efforts should be made to bring all community partners to the table and to build relationships between potential partners.
- Capacity-building or “jumpstart” activities might include:
 - Identifying barriers to participation, e.g. transportation, parents’ work schedules, lack of adequate facilities, etc.
 - Identifying community assets, potential partners, organizational capacities
 - Technical assistance to design programs based on standards, logic models and community needs
 - Technical assistance with facilities, licensing, etc.
 - Program implementation efforts, such as setting up transportation, screening procedures, supervision structures, staff recruitment and orientation, planning for professional development, program marketing & outreach strategies, purchasing equipment and supplies, determining curriculum and assessment, establishing written linkage agreements with community partners, etc.

2. How might these grants be structured?

- Fund “intermediary” organizations and/or individuals who have actual experience in program design and implementation to help communities set up and implement programs over a 6- month period. ISBE should stipulate what qualifications are needed to effectively complete the work.
- Cover expenses related to community efforts, e.g. transportation to meetings, staff time if necessary.
- Use current data from ISBE to inform costs related to new programs, e.g. equipping classrooms, approximate operating costs per child and to guide budgeting for program design and implementation
- Research the possibility of using the FY06 Block Grant RFP budget forms (community services line) to cover capacity-building activities related to designing and implementing early childhood programs
- Take into consideration that some communities may need to engage in capacity-building activities for a 12 month period or longer before classroom-based PreK services to children can begin, particularly if facilities need to be licensed.

3. About how many grants should be made available? How much funding should be allocated for this purpose?

- Start small with 5-10 high-need communities. Recommend a percent of total new funds be set aside for capacity building activities and actual new services to children and families. For instance, if \$30 M in new funding is appropriated for FY06 and 5% is set aside to open programs in high-need communities, \$1.5 million would be available for this purpose.

A Proposal for Consideration: Developing a Data-Driven Framework to Ensure Access to Early Childhood Services in Illinois Communities

Problem Statement. Illinois has many early childhood programs that offer a range of services to a variety of families. Numerous tools exist to assess community needs and availability of services for pregnant women and families with young children in a geographical context. These include:

- the *Illinois Geographic Information System* website that facilitates comparisons of demographic early childhood data to analyze community needs and availability of services (<http://map1.gismap.us/chicago/>);
- the *Illinois Facilities Fund's Moving Towards A System* 2002 comprehensive statewide needs assessment of early care and education in Illinois communities (<http://www.iff.org/content.cfm?contentid=41>);
- the *Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services Child Care Supply and Demand website* that presents up-to-date information about early care and education programs for low-income children, as well as community conditions, assets and needs for all Chicago community areas (<http://dcys-ccsd.chapinhall.org/index.html>); and
- the *Illinois Head Start Association* website that provides Illinois Head Start Grantee profiles, including 2002 program, child, and family data (<http://www.ilheadstart.org/map.html>)

However, Illinois does not have a transparent, data-driven framework to guide the statewide allocation of early childhood resources to ensure that funds are used most efficiently to meet the needs of families with young children. For example, preschool programs remain unevenly distributed relative to need; with the last two installments of \$30 million each in Early Childhood Block Grant funds, we have come close to saturation in meeting the need for Prekindergarten and Head Start programs serving children at-risk of school failure in some communities, but may still offer little access to these services in other communities.

Proposed Activities. The role of the Illinois Early Learning Council is to develop a high-quality early learning system available to all children under age five by engaging in collaborative planning across programs, divisions and agencies at the state level.

1. We propose that the Council convene a workgroup of experts to complete some immediate short-term activities, in collaboration with Illinois State Board of Education and the Chicago Public Schools, which would add value to the FY06 Early Childhood Block Grant resource allocation process. This includes analyzing the availability of existing PreK and Head Start services in the context of community needs to identify high-need, under-resourced communities.
2. In the mid-term, the workgroup would work on compiling data, preferably using a web-based mapping system that could be manipulated by users for a variety of purposes and at a range of geographic levels of analysis, to describe where 0-5 early childhood services are, the need for services by community (e.g. demographics and other indicators of need), and gaps between assets and needs. This would allow stakeholders to better understand the current service system, as well as how and where we need to grow different types of quality programs in the future. State and local agencies could review this information as a part of RFP review and other resource allocation processes. A written report by the Council could also be produced summarizing this information.

3. In the mid-to long-term, a Facilities Workgroup could be convened to develop a process for creating asset maps that identify the number, size, quality and condition of facilities to help guide decisions about where services could be located (e.g. schools don't need to add or re-program classrooms if they exist in a nearby community-based organization, and vice versa).

Desired Results:

- ✓ Data on early childhood program assets and community needs (built on current efforts) is used consistently by federal, state and local government agencies to inform resource allocation processes in Illinois.
- ✓ High need, under-resourced communities (e.g. geographic need, high percentages of English Language Learners, DCFS-involved children, etc.) are recognized and capacity-building strategies are identified to meet the varied needs of young children and families.
- ✓ More “transparent” decision-making frameworks for awarding new funding that involve program administrators across agencies are developed so that resources are used most efficiently and the goal of creating a comprehensive early childhood system is advanced.
- ✓ Data on early childhood programs administered by multiple state and federal agencies as well as comparative community demographic data is readily available to assist in:
 - assessing community needs and availability of services for pregnant women and families with young children in a geographical context;
 - informing program planning and funding processes (e.g. identifying underserved areas, areas of potential duplication);
 - raising awareness of available programs among community stakeholders; and
 - improving collaboration at the local level by providing a consistent source of information on programs and services available in a community